

Title: Folie A Deux

Author: Biblio

Rating: R

Pairing: Jack and Daniel

Category: Angst. Drama. First Time. Hurt/Comfort. Romance.

Season/Spoilers: Season 5.

Synopsis: When words seem to get in the way, do actions speak louder than thoughts, hopes and dreams? Or is madness truly shared by two?

Warnings: A little bad language.



Folie A Deux

A slash story by Biblio

Daniel backed towards the centre of the tomb, camera at the ready. He wanted a record of the placement of each panel of the cartouche before he began to take his close-ups. The symbols were unlike anything he'd ever seen before, a shock after the angular severity of the massive granite architecture in the other chambers they'd passed through.

"Daniel!"

Jack was Bored. And sharing.

Daniel was sure Jack could tell from all the way over there this was an answering grimace, not a smile.

Jack's eyes narrowed. "Watch it on that walkway!"

It was hard for Daniel to believe there was ever a time he and Jack could communicate without, well, punctuation. Questions seemed loaded, answers ambiguous, ordinary conversation mired in inexplicable obscurity. Worst of all, he couldn't see any way past it.

"I've never seen a chamber like this one," Daniel offered, surprising both of them. He was almost annoyed at his pacific tone, but let it go. He expected the effort to be wasted, as it so often was these days, but somehow, he couldn't quite stop himself from reaching out. Jack was worth it to him. Worth finding the words they'd never needed. Now they did, they only got in the way. If this was what it took, though...

It was Jack's turn to grimace but after a brief hesitation, he walked forward, looking almost receptive.

"The star configuration is unusual," Daniel went on, showing willing.

"Fascinating?" Jack asked whimsically.

Daniel looked up sharply to meet surprisingly kind brown eyes. He smiled, tentatively, acknowledging Jack's effort and relaxing when Jack shook his head at him a little, a token protest, and they both knew it.

"It is fascinating," Daniel answered boldly, risking another small smile.

Jack fingered his P-90 absently, watching Daniel with the dubious air of a desperate man willing to be entertained.

"The four walkways are..." Daniel went on.

"Compass points," Jack interrupted, grinning now. The grin widened when Daniel wasn't fazed by his perception. "You're nowhere near as much fun as Carter," he complained. "I can't fake you out no-how these days."

"You never could," Daniel riposted, smiling again. "But not only is the chamber in the form of an eight-pointed star, the central dais mirrors that. Astronomy may have played a huge part in the culture - possibly even the religion of the race who lived here."

"Why not astrology?" Jack countered, grinning again. "Just because you haven't found a crystal ball doesn't mean you won't."

Daniel ignored that, turning back to head towards the central dais. He was curious about the slender crystalline pillars encircling what could be an altar or other ceremonial...Jack insisted on calling them doodads. Like most of Jack's suggestions, once heard, it tended to stick like Crazy Glue. "Eight of them, like the points of the other stars," he mused.

"The Ancients did their math in base eight," Jack suggested proudly, surprising Daniel enough to turn around again. "I have my moments," he observed complacently.

"There's nothing to suggest this is a settlement of the Ancients. The language is very different. Maybe the people here had contact with them," Daniel speculated enthusiastically, rolling with it. "The star symbolism could be directly related to the Stargate. Perhaps they delved into the technology and..."

"I've got a gun," Jack warned him teasingly, "Don't make me use it."

His tone was as easy as his sudden smile, which meant Daniel felt fully justified in ignoring the pointed way Jack peeled back the Velcro and tapped his watch. He turned on his heel and marched out onto the dais, making a beeline for the nearest pillar, his

determination to film the panels of the cartouche momentarily forgotten in sheer excitement at the discovery.

"They're nothing like Goa'uld power crystals," Daniel murmured, frowning over the sleek, slippery grey surface of the crystals. "Sam was sure these were powering the complex?" A rhetorical question. Sam was always sure. Even when she was wrong, something she'd learned to laugh about, later, over coffee and blue Jell-O.

"Just..." Jack gestured towards the crystals with his P-90. "Go easy," he ordered.

"The pillars appear to have been carved from a single crystal," Daniel observed, reaching out to smooth careful fingers over the side of the pillar in front of him. "Or many crystals fused...either way, the technology is far beyond ours."

"Isn't it always?" Jack said dryly. He looked around, not particularly interested, wandering aimlessly over to the edge of the walkway. "How far down is this?"

Daniel rolled his eyes and walked between the columns. If he stood by the altar and did a slow sweep with the camera, he could feed the information into the imaging program Sam had dug up for him from the boys at NASA and get a 3D representation of the chamber. There was another star symbol set into the granite floor, formed of the same crystal as the pillars.

Curious, Daniel walked forward. The air in front of him rippled, something like a heat haze, and he saw a glowing crystal set on top of the simple hexagonal stone column that formed the altar. "I've never seen anything like this!" he called excitedly to Jack. He activated his radio. "Sam! You have to get down here. It's the most amazing thing..."

"I've ever seen!" Sam's rich chuckle sounded. "I was just going to radio in, Daniel. You have to get up here. It's the most amazing thing I've ever seen...not so much engineering as...as..."

"A dance of light, DanielJackson," Teal'c's voice interrupted.

Jack rolled his eyes. "You've been watching 'The Abyss' again," he complained into his radio.

"Indeed. DanielJackson provided Ben and Jerry's and Major Carter her wide screen TV and much popcorn," Teal'c informed him smugly.

Jack straightened up, scowling at Daniel. "Why wasn't I invited?"

"You know you and sci-fi," his team chorused as one, in person and via radio.

"Yeah! Well, I might hate sci-fi but..." He glared at the one right in front of him. "You also know me and popcorn. And Ben and Jerry's."

"The Full Vermonty'," Daniel observed innocently.

"Maple pecan," Sam sighed dreamily, her voice echoing round the chamber from Daniel's radio. "Sir."

"Keep right on, Carter," Jack said grimly. "I'm not the one with the performance evaluation looming."

"O'Neill," Teal'c warned, his voice rich with amusement.

"How come everyone takes you everywhere and I'm never invited?" Jack complained right back at the big guy.

"We like him," Daniel said gravely. "And he's housetrained." Sam's sudden snort of laughter survived even an icy 'Major' growled into Jack's radio.

"Accept my high-five, DanielJackson," Teal'c responded, heavy on the gravitas.

"Nobody loves me, everybody hates me," Jack sing-songed.

"We'd like you more if you wouldn't sing," Daniel winced, turning his attention once more to the altar. "The crystal is glowing, Sam," he radioed, absolutely fascinated. "Like a diamond on fire," he added, failing to do justice to the brilliance of the display flaring and playing over his skin and the walls of the chamber.

"Back up, Daniel," Sam ordered, her voice abruptly sobering. "What kind of crystal? If it's glowing, this far underground with no natural light to refract, that assumes some kind of energy source. Maybe you should hold on until I can get down there and help you check it out."

"No way!" Daniel snorted derisively, stepping up closer to inspect the altar. Each side of the hexagon was covered in the same writings as the panels of the cartouche. Perhaps a key to the language, he thought optimistically, praying for a shortcut. He had to find one. One time. It had to happen. "You'll just drag me up there to help you check out your discovery first."

"Would I?" Sam's response was all little-girl dishonesty.

"Yes," Jack grumbled in unison with Daniel's emphatic retort. He watched warily as Daniel peered at the glowing crystal, walking carefully around it to film each of the panels on the fancy pedestal in turn. He knew he should make Daniel back off a little, wait for Carter, but damn, how long had it been since his team had a mission like this, easy and clean? Fun. Carter wasn't worried, more teasing, and Jack felt he should go with it, try to keep the mood.

Still, he hadn't kept everyone alive this long by taking stupid risks, so he walked swiftly forward to cross between the pillars, standing leaning against one as Daniel shucked his

pack and slipped the camera into it, ready now to get up close and personal with the crystal. He felt better for being right by Daniel. Just in case.

Jack watched Daniel with the same intensity his besotted archaeologist was watching the crystal, admiring the unconscious grace with which he moved when his mind was focused on anything but himself. He could barely remember a time when he could look at Daniel without wanting, when distance hadn't been an absolute, a necessity just so he could go on.

He moved easily round the dais to watch Daniel work. Daniel was wide-eyed and wondering, biting his lower lip in concentration. Daniel never changed, every time he found something, anything, he got the same rush, the same charge. Just like Jack did, watching him. Every time.

Jack functioned. He was used to it boxing off his life, walling and compartmentalising, and he had no choice, none at all. There were a thousand reasons. In some ways, it was easier to cope because it was Jack's problem alone. It wasn't two of them fighting an attraction. Much more than attraction, if he were honest. There was some safety for him in the fact Daniel's mind never went there. Daniel's vibes were never specifically sexual, he was too much inside his own head and at the same time focused outside his own existence. Daniel found himself pretty irrelevant. Jack, as a man who watched, was bitterly aware of the frustration this evoked in more predators than him. Daniel moved through a world of watchers and never knew it.

Barely aware that Jack was watching him now, Daniel reached out carefully, fingers skimming the surface of the crystal. It was hard to make out the exact shape with the shifting hues in the light. Jack shook his head a little, recognising Daniel wasn't the only one falling into dangerous distraction. He was far too focused on the way the colours were playing over Daniel's face.

"These particular points," Daniel gestured, looking up at him suddenly. "Here and here. They're elongated."

"Handles," Jack suggested stupidly, mesmerised by the glow in the gentle blue eyes, his gut clenching. Beautiful, beautiful boy. Untouched. Untouchable. Wasn't that Jack's luck all over?

Daniel touched the tip of a finger to one of the points, looked up uncertainly at Jack, as if expecting a rebuke. He licked his lips nervously and a sharp pang of desire coiled deep and low in Jack's belly, rooting him to the spot, making him feel like the voyeur he'd become, wanting that sweet mouth wrapped around his dick so badly...

Shaken, Jack stood still and silent, only watching as Daniel touched a finger to the other elongated point and the chamber abruptly filled with sullen bruise-purple light, angry and snapping, slamming electrically from one pillar to the next, fast, too fucking *fast*...

"Daniel!" Jack roared, already moving as the circuit completed and the light hit high in Daniel's back, slamming him up to the tips of his toes, almost lifting him into the air with the force of it, his arms flung out, pinioned, mouth open and working soundlessly. Screaming.

Daniel was *screaming*.

Jack crashed into Daniel, taking him down hard, crushing him to the ground beneath his weight, the light moving like a live thing, tendrils trailing over Daniel's body and his cradling one. Each touch stabbed deep, puncturing like a needle. He thought of the force of that first blast striking Daniel, the agony of it, fury and instinct driving him forward to come up firing at the crystal, vindictively emptying the clip even as the fucker shattered and rained down around him.

Activating his radio with scrabbling, clumsy fingers, he fired out orders, silenced all questions, rapidly went through the set drill for medical emergency and scattered Carter and Teal'c running, wholly focused on Daniel, conscious, his mouth still working soundlessly, eyes drenched with pain. Jack reached a shaking, cradling hand to Daniel's cheek, obscurely shamed when Daniel nuzzled blindly into the comfort. He'd had little enough of it from Jack these past months. Years.

Daniel couldn't form the words, couldn't breathe for this broken glass piercing and the pain crushing his chest, but Jack knew what he was trying to say and the ready guilt choked him.

Jack...

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"Hey," Janet crooned softly, smiling gently down at him. "Welcome back, Daniel. You had us worried there for a while." She reached towards him and let her hand rest easily on the pillow when he flinched back from her.

He felt raw. "S-sorry." It was a thread of a voice. Apologising for what, he wasn't sure.

"You have no wounds, no burns, no sign of physical injury," Janet said briskly. "The PET scan shows signs of unusual levels of activity, particularly in your parietal lobes - the sensory centres of the brain - but nothing to cause undue concern. It's nothing like what happened to Colonel O'Neill when the knowledge of the Ancients was downloaded into his brain."

"Damn!" Daniel mourned in a weak voice, reaching out carefully to touch one finger to Janet's arm. She smiled down at him.

"Daniel!" Jack called, harsh with relief as he barged into the room.

"Did I say you could..." Janet snapped.

"I hurt like hell," Daniel muttered, distracting them both. Janet's eyes went straight to his IV, frowning. "No more," he said at once. Painkillers weren't the answer. "Not as bad," he wavered, uncertain and unconvincing.

Janet hovered a moment longer, assessing him, then she nodded reluctantly.

"Airman Jenkins was whining about his dressing oozing," Jack said heartlessly, knowing it would shift Fraiser rapido.

"I gave him enough sedative to take down a bull, Colonel, so I'd be astonished if he was up and complaining about anything," Janet answered pleasantly. "But I will call the general for you. And Sam, Teal'c and Cassie." She smiled at Daniel. "Get some rest. Call me when the colonel annoys you," she suggested, as if it was just a matter of when, not if.

Jack walked up to the bed, stood looking down at Daniel for a long moment. "You look like crap," he observed in a mild, masking, conversational tone.

*Scared the shit out of me, you stubborn sonovabitch.*

"Thanks," Daniel answered huskily.

Jack shook his head at him, then reached into the bowl that stood on top of the bedside cabinet. He picked out an ice cube and held it to Daniel's lips. The blessed coolness slid down over his tongue to ease his parched throat. Daniel suckled greedily at slick cold and warm skin of Jack's fingers.

*Jesus, Daniel! Don't do that!* Jack warned, snatching his fingers away. He crossed his arms emphatically over his chest, hands stuffed under his armpits, then stood glowering down at Daniel, as if it were his fault.

A welter of confused images struck at Daniel, skin and tangled limbs...heat...crumpled sheets...a warm, firm mouth hard against his...

"How's our boy?"

Both he and Jack jumped at Hammond's jovial hail from the doorway.

"Daniel!" Sam's voice was sharp with relief as she darted around the general and made a beeline for Daniel, muscling into Jack's spot at his bedside like she owned it.

*Back of the line, Carter.* Jack's annoyance was cutting.

Daniel glanced up at Jack, frowning at his sharp, unmerited rebuke. He let it go only because Sam seemed to make nothing of it.

"DanielJackson." Teal'c too stepped in front of Jack, his eyes looking over Daniel searchingly.

Daniel smiled hesitantly up at him and Sam, his eyes still on Jack, brooding in the background. Not Jack's natural place under any circumstance.

Sam stroked her hand over his hair. "How are you feeling?" she asked gently.

"Better than I probably look," Daniel answered staunchly.

Teal'c raised a dubious eyebrow, but bowed acceptance of his stoicism.

*Hey, Daniel, don't mind me. Quite comfortable, there? Can I fetch you a drink? Fluff your pillow?*

Startled by the biting sarcasm, Daniel looked up at Jack, who standing behind Sam, blandly watching him. Daniel glanced cautiously at the others, who either hadn't heard Jack or...There was no 'or'. No one standing by his bed would have let Jack get away with a crack like that, especially Janet Fraiser, who had slipped back into the room and was watching him searchingly from the foot of the bed. They hadn't heard Jack but he had?

Oy.

"Can I go home?" Daniel demanded fretfully, his head spinning. This was surreal. He was hallucinating. Or something. He'd always been able to read Jack's body language, but hearing it in his head was a first. He and Jack were getting too intense. Not that they'd ever been anything else, but still. He was channelling the man. Or - or something.

He needed some space, to sort this out. He'd been down this particular road before, the path paved to insanity, and was not about to go there again. Jack had come through for him, in the end. He'd been proved right - again - but it hadn't stopped them tossing him in a padded cell in Mental Health doped up to the eyeballs because it was easier to believe he was nuts than to believe him.

"Please, Doctor," he pleaded.

"No, you may not!" Janet retorted sharply. "You need rest. And supervision."

*You're staying put if I have to nail your ass to that bed!* Jack agreed emphatically.

"Don't you trust me?" Daniel asked, shocked. He flushed violently when everyone looked at him, realising after a moment they thought he was answering Janet. "Thanks a lot," he said, managing to sound indignant. A little wavery but definitely pissed.

Sam smiled. "I have a spare room," she offered kindly. "And chocolate walnut cookies."

*Since when has Daniel ever done anything you told him to, Carter?* "I'll take him." Jack interrupted loudly, the flat finality in his voice momentarily deflating everyone else. "You have work to do," he told Sam tersely. "SG-5 brought back an artefact from 797 they need you to take a look at."

"I will assist you, Major Carter," Teal'c offered graciously in the awkward pause as Sam had to suck it up in resentful silence. She was too professional to look to Hammond for help he probably wouldn't give. He never interfered directly in Jack's command of his team.

"Sir?" Jack returned Hammond's knowing look. So what if he was overly protective? Daniel had scared the shit out of him again. He thought he'd lost him. Again. He wanted the boy right where he could keep an eye on him. He noticed Daniel stiffening up and shooting him a resentful look, which he ignored. "Tell me what you need me to do for Daniel," he asked Fraiser tersely.

"Daniel needs bed rest, baseline observations and pain meds," Fraiser snapped. "He isn't going anywhere tonight."

"So we'd better leave him to get some rest," Hammond ordered, recognising a very pointed cue from his CMO.

Sam moved away a tad reluctantly, smoothing the hair from Daniel's brow with a quick, warm smile only he saw. Daniel took her hand and held it for a moment, trying to look as reassuringly healthy - and normal - as he could. Sam squeezed his fingers gently, winked at him and turned smiling to Teal'c, her lab assistant de jour.

"Daniel Jackson, I am pleased to see you safe." Teal'c rested his hand heavily on Daniel's thigh for a moment.

*Hands off, big guy!*

Daniel saw the tension tighten Jack's body at the same time as the words echoed harshly in his own mind. He gaped, wondering where the hell that came from. Jack sounded - it was ridiculous of course, but Jack sounded almost - jealous.

It was his own damn fault if he was, Daniel thought resentfully. Daniel wasn't the one who'd shoved Jack away, who wasn't comfortable unless they had the width of the briefing room table between them. At all times. It was a little late in the game - a year or so late - for Jack to get pissy just because not all of Daniel's friendships had atrophied along with Jack's feeling for him.

"You will rest now," Teal'c advised him kindly. "You are not yet yourself."

"I'll give it a try," Daniel answered distractedly, eyeing Jack warily, wondering why even when he was hearing voices, he had to hear Jack's, and even in his imagination Jack sounded pissed off at the universe.

"You gave us all a scare, son," Hammond said quietly, looking quickly at Jack.

*Pardon me for being concerned. He only stopped breathing there.*

"I stopped breathing!" Daniel gasped,

"The colonel had to do CPR, Daniel," Janet said soothingly. "That's why your chest is a little sore."

"A little?" Daniel said involuntarily, blinking hard at the sudden rush of guilt, fear and anger that boiled through him. "I don't remember," he fretted. "I don't remember anything."

*Bastard lightshow! Never again, Daniel, never a-goddamned-gain.* "You were passed out." Jack's calm tone was at odds with the jagged, panicking images spiralling past Daniel's eyes, too quick to see. "That light, whatever it was, wouldn't leave you alone, even after I destroyed the power source. There was some kind of residual charge in the air. It was like the two of you were connected. I had to get you out of the chamber to stop it. The pain just seemed to keep on building, getting stronger and stronger..." His voice trailed off and he shivered in a rare show of reaction. "Can't make an omelette without breaking eggs," he covered, making an attempt to shrug off any hint of vulnerability as he picked up a chair and moved it next to Daniel's bed, planting himself on it with the calm certainty of someone who'd saved a life and wasn't scared to use it. He looked up at Janet steadily.

*Make me,* he invited softly.

"It's okay." Daniel's soft, bewildered murmur stopped the brewing fight in its tracks. He barely heard the goodbyes and well-wishes, the promise he would go home with Jack in the morning if he rested now and his blood gases were good.

His mind was filled with Jack, watching him steadily, watching over him.

Jack...

*Daniel.*

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It had to be the light, the strange purple-black light that had hit him so hard. Jack had been bathed in it too, when he'd thrown himself at Daniel, trying to break the circuit. Connection. Whatever it was. If Daniel's brain had been affected, maybe Jack's had too. Not enough to receive, because he gave no sign of hearing anything going on in Daniel's head. Maybe enough to broadcast?

He heard some of Jack's thoughts as clearly as if he were speaking them aloud, felt the rush of Jack's emotions with near physical force. He didn't get everything, not even close. Most thinking wasn't in words, it wasn't even conscious. People literally spoke without thinking, at least consciously, and most of what they did seemed just as impulsive. But when Jack was thinking what he wasn't saying, Daniel heard it. What he felt, Daniel felt too. It was little enough.

He couldn't help but think telepathy was overrated. How often would your enemy conveniently sit there thinking at you just what you needed to know? If it was telepathy.

Daniel thought it could be. He'd been wrong before. The kind of wrong that got him a padded cell in Mental Health. Respect for Jack's privacy was warring with fear of himself and where it was his mind was taking him now. He had so many questions and he needed privacy, time and Jack's help. He needed Jack. When, he thought with a sigh, had he not?

"I still say we should have stayed at my place," Jack insisted stubbornly as the elevator doors opened. He looked along the hallway to Daniel's loft unenthusiastically. "It's sunny. I have the garden."

"I need bed rest," Daniel said patiently for the twentieth time. He was exhausted, shaken and stumbling, glad of Jack's solid support, reaching quickly for him, holding him close when he needed it.

I need space.

Daniel stumbled again, shocked by Jack's embittered vehemence, miserably conscious of his dependence. "You got me here, safe and sound. I haven't got the energy to do anything but rest. Go home. I won't tell," he offered proudly, forgetting his woes.

Jack shot him an impatient look as he unlocked the door. "Don't be stupid, Daniel. Hammond, Fraiser and the others would get in line to skin me alive if I left you."

Pride stiffened Daniel's spine and had him pushing away from Jack to walk on his own. He had no idea how he was going to make it up the three steps he had to take up into the loft proper, but at the speed he was moving, he had lots of time to think it through.

For cryin' out loud, Daniel! Get your ass back here! "Daniel!"

The mind voice sighed with rough, reluctant affection, something like amusement at his stubbornness. It was startling after Jack's bitterness of a moment ago. Daniel jumped when Jack's arm slid around his waist again.

Jesus. Lead me not into temptation.

Jack practically frogmarched Daniel across to his bedroom, not at all sure what to make of being the absolute focus of Daniel's dazed concentration. On the upside, at least Daniel was dazed enough he wasn't talking.

"Thank you!" Daniel muttered resentfully as Jack gave him an encouraging push towards his bed and left him to it.

Self-preservation drove Jack towards the door. It was bad enough being unable to stop thinking about Daniel naked and sprawling in bed without having to see it.

"Why?" Daniel asked feebly.

"What?" Jack frowned back at Daniel, still standing where he'd put him, looking little-boy lost.

"Nothing," Daniel said hurriedly.

"I'll be watching TV if you need me," Jack announced in what he hoped was a 'don't need me' voice. He left before Daniel could say or do anything else. He stood staring in the middle of the living room for some time before he could bring himself to even entertain the unbelievable truth. Then he stormed back into the bedroom to find Daniel entangled in an uncooperative T-shirt and cursing creatively. "You don't have a TV!" he accused indignantly, closing the gap to briskly unhook, untwist and yank. Daniel's face emerged from the thin grey jersey fabric flushed and sulky.

"It's right there," Daniel snapped.

Jack looked at the tiny portable perched on the whatever it was. Not bedroom furniture, that was for sure. More like a home office or something. Who had two dining tables and no TV? The man was not normal. He scowled at Daniel, who was too close. The man was biting his lip, and he was too close.

He was also going seven shades of red and looking even more lost than he had before, which was something of an achievement even for...for...

God. Moments like this, Daniel looking to him like this, vulnerable and needing, Jack wanted to pull him in tight, have him close and never let him go. He wanted to tilt that stubborn chin and kiss some sense into him. He wanted...Christ, he hurt with wanting. He ached with Daniel never seeing, never knowing what he felt or what he wanted, what they could be together.

There wasn't room for anyone else and Daniel didn't even get that.

They were too close. Jack was breathing Daniel in, warm and soap-scented, smooth supple strength close enough to take, to hold. He dreamed it, was haunted by it. Taunted. Daniel beneath him, crying out in his shock the first time Jack took him, moaning with pleasure as skin moved inside him for the first time. Daniel loving him, loving him back.

Daniel's eyes filling.

"Daniel?" Jack asked sharply, grabbing him by the shoulders.

"I can hear you," Daniel said desperately, taut and shivering with unmistakable distress.

"Of course you can," Jack responded with iron patience. "I'm standing right in front of you, talking."

"I can hear you."

Despite himself, Jack's finger stroked up Daniel's cheek to catch the single tear rolling down. He was caught and held by the astonished pain in Daniel's eyes.

Daniel felt dazed and disconnected, looking both outside himself and in, his own face filling his mind, the knife edge of control that Jack walked every day, responsibility, discipline and denial, all because Daniel didn't see. He'd never even suspected. They were too close, he knew that, but he'd never made the leap from this strength of feeling between them to sex, never imagined their connection could take Jack this far.

He could feel how Jack saw him, aching and hard-edged with desire and something close to resentment because a man shouldn't, couldn't be this beautiful, this wanted...

"You're in love with me," Daniel said wonderingly, lost in the moment, lost in Jack's intensity. Jack's pain. "I'm sorry!" he gasped, heart slamming against his ribs, instinctively reaching out for Jack, who flinched back from his touch as if he were scalded. "I'm so sorry." Wasn't this the same failure of imagination, of empathy, he always had? Why did he never see?

"You don't know what the hell you're talking about!" Jack snarled. He was pale though, his eyes desperate.

"It would be the first time," Daniel said urgently, stumbling forward as Jack instinctively backed away from him. "I - I've never been with a man, Jack. You're right about that."

What the...

"Fuck?" Daniel interjected before Jack could complete the thought. "I'm sorry," he said sorrowfully. "You pushed me so far away, Jack."

Not far enough.

Daniel turned and made his way towards his bed, stumbling again on the steps. He felt faint, muffled, tinny sounds seeming to come from a great distance, but Jack was too important to him to let this be. He took another clumsy step, then Jack's hands were at his

waist, steadying him. Daniel leaned gratefully until Jack had him settled on the bed, then he reached out to take Jack's hand, refusing to let go when he pulled away.

"Why couldn't you tell me?" Daniel asked softly. "We've always been able to talk. Always." He was afraid to push, afraid to drive Jack any further away than he already was.

Jesus, Daniel, don't look at me like that, Jack thought bitterly, his fingers clenching. *I can't stand it.*

"Look at you like what, Jack?"

Jack didn't answer.

"I thought it was me," Daniel said dully. "I just can't give what's needed. Even when I see, when I know, I'm never enough. I thought with a friend it would be different. I thought you were different."

I'm not your friend.

"I know that now."

I didn't mean it like that! I mean - Christ, I don't know what I mean! Jack roughly scrubbed the heel of his hand across his eyes, achingly aware of the heat from Daniel's shivering body and the longing in his quiet voice. *I fell in love. It's not your fault, not your problem.*

"It's always my problem. Sarah loved me, Sha'uri loved me. I left them both," Daniel said bitterly. "For my work. Always my work. I can't leave it alone." He turned blindly to Jack. "I trust the work, trust the truth far more than I trust myself with people. Especially people who love me." He smiled, a brief twist of his lips. "I turn away, Jack, because it hurts too much to open up. It's ironic, don't you think?" he asked bleakly. "The one time - the one person I don't - can't - shut out and you..." Daniel slumped, exhausted and shaking. "I thought it was me."

Not this time. Maybe not ever, Daniel. Jack got up, pushing gently at Daniel's shoulders until he obediently lay down. He swallowed hard when Daniel refused to let go of his hand, perching awkwardly at his side, scared of how close they were, too close for any comfort for either of them. Whatever the device had done to Daniel, scrambling his brain, he'd better get over goddamn quick because he was too perceptive on a good day and if he wasn't so - so Daniel, if he didn't find it so fucking hard to believe he wasn't some loser, he'd have known what was between them.

You're too goddamn hard on yourself, Daniel, he thought sadly. *Does it ever occur to you to blame the people who let you down, who made it hard for you to trust? Made it hard for you to be with people at all? I hate to see you close in on yourself, always did. Always felt like you were robbed, that it was an easy thing, so damned easy to give you affection.*

I didn't know - I didn't want...I just can't stop, Jack seethed.

"It's wrong to want me?" Daniel rolled away from him, curling into a ball with his back to Jack. "It's wrong and that's it? That's why you can't tell me you love me, why you can't give me a chance to - to even think about what I?" He broke off in distress and noisily gulped in a calming breath. "What I might want?" he managed to finish, his voice thready.

Jack reached automatically for Daniel's shoulder, was shaken off.

"You're an arrogant sonovabitch," Daniel whispered, curling tight round the helpless misery knotting his gut. "You never stopped to think about how I feel, how it hurts to be cut off like so much dead weight by the one person - the only person who got close, who got in. I love you. Don't you know that?"

Jack closed his eyes, hurting for Daniel, for both of them. *Always.*

Daniel turned around to look at him then, as pale as he'd been flushed, bewildered pain shadowing his eyes. "Always?"

Jack went very still, knowing he hadn't said the word aloud, that Daniel hadn't read his body language, hadn't known, couldn't know - not with his back turned.

Daniel? he thought, stunned, his mind instinctively reaching out, taking him where he needed to go. *You can hear me?*

"Isn't that what I've been trying to tell you?"

You're reading my mind? Fuck me! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

Daniel nodded helplessly. "Everything since I regained consciousness," he admitted at once, his voice wavering again. He looked tired. Tired and beat. "And no, I don't know why it's only me," he added in a stressed rush. "I'm guessing it's something to do with the relative length of our exposure to the energy beam."

Jack just sat there, speechless. Why the hell did this stuff keep happening to him? It happened so damned often he was losing the ability to get freaked by it, for God's sake. If it was true - Daniel's sudden scowl certainly suggested it was true - then he had a far more immediate problem. What the hell else Daniel had heard - read - whatever? When had this crap started? How much had he given away, for fuck's sake!?

"What did you think would happen if you admitted you were attracted to me, Jack?" Daniel challenged him, pretty much answering the question about how much he'd heard. Read. Everything. Every goddamned thing.

If I turned up on your doorstep and out of the blue asked you if we could fuck? Jack thought furiously, intentionally crude in his mortification.

Daniel went seven shades of red. "You could have tried telling me you were in love with you and you want to make love with me!" he retorted angrily.

I do.

"Which?" Daniel asked involuntarily

Both.

And when you said no, because there was no way in hell you'd risk our friendship or the team for sex, Jack thought biting, how in Christ's name were we supposed to get back from that?

"I lost you anyway!" Daniel retorted. "The team..." He had to take a moment, to calm himself. "You just stopped caring, Jack."

"That's not fair!" Jack bit out furiously, snapping bolt upright.

"You pushed us all away and did your job," Daniel said dully. "You're the one who can't take the risk, Jack. Don't blame me for not making a choice you never gave me."

So choose.

The thought was out before Jack could stop it, but he didn't take it back. He was screwed anyway and he needed - he wasn't sure he could go on if he didn't know.

Choose.

What did Daniel want? Distance from Jack had hurt him unbearably, so he'd shut off those feelings. Lied, as best he could, to distance himself in turn. He had tried hard to believe he could cope, that Jack was no different from other friends, like Robert. That he didn't feel more for Jack, that he didn't want the closeness of what he'd had with Sha'uri, not with Jack. He'd given up so much in the hope that he could go on alone, just as he always had.

He'd denied their connection because it hurt too much to lose it. He hadn't wanted to know why he'd been so vehement in his denial, why in the end he'd allowed Jack to push him away, why he closed in on himself more and more, seeking solace in his books, his work. Why he hadn't been able to face it. It was more than self-protection, it was fear. Daniel hadn't lost himself in his work; he'd used it to hide.

He'd never run from anyone but Jack. Why was it so very hard for him to accept? His friendship with Jack was the deepest, the most complicated and the most sincere relationship he'd had in his life. The feeling he had for Jack - no one else came close.

Was that his problem? That he felt not just differently for Jack, but felt more? What did he think that cost him? Did he honestly believe loving Jack took anything away from Sha'uri?

Anything he hadn't already taken, he amended bitterly.

Was Daniel so fixated on his losses and his failures, he couldn't allow himself anything but doubt? Why did he feel he had no choice but to shut himself off?

"You're right," he admitted to Jack, quiet and ashamed. He was scared to risk the little he'd felt he was holding onto of their friendship. He was scared to risk himself even more than he was scared of risking Jack.

Now, they were here, the two of them, tired of running, of distance, unable to reach out and feeling so alone because of it. They'd learned to function apart. Daniel didn't want to function. He wanted to feel. He wanted their connection, their intimacy, the trust he shared only with Jack. He wanted it, needed it so much he was terrified. Losing Jack had stripped away all his defences. Every hard lesson he'd learned in life, all his self-sufficiency, his solace in himself, in his researches, was lost to him. He had to face the truth just as Jack had faced the truth.

He couldn't be alone anymore, not without being lonely. He wondered dismally if Jack had any idea what he'd cost him in stripping away his one, small defence.

Without conscious decision, Daniel sat up, turning once again to face Jack, who was waiting, watching him, taut with fear and anger and a hopeless hunger.

"I want to be with you," he said quietly, sure of this at least. It was easier to say, to feel, than can't be without you. Both were true, though, and he was very afraid of where this need would take him. It was easy to trust Jack but so hard to trust himself.

I need you.

"I understand," Daniel promised blindly. Jack had been afraid to ask for the sexual relationship he believed Daniel couldn't give. At the core, they trusted one another, and Daniel felt there was very little he wouldn't give for Jack. Sex wasn't his choice, it maybe would never have been his choice, but he was faced with it now. He came up onto his knees, facing Jack, tentatively reaching out to cup his face, sorry and hurting for how much Jack was holding back from him. He felt something inside him melt at the weight Jack had willingly shouldered to protect him and tried to smile.

They both jumped, shocked and a little embarrassed when Jack blindly turned into Daniel's hand, kissed his palm.

I need you, Daniel. Please...

Jack was moving now, his face still stony, not giving in yet, still hanging on to his necessary distance. Daniel didn't flinch when Jack's arms locked around him. As Jack took him down to the bed, Daniel slid his arms around him. He had difficulty meeting Jack's eyes when Jack chose to lie there with him, leaning his weight into him, one hip hard against his in an easy tangle of legs.

Daniel wanted to be close. He wanted...he didn't...It – it was hard to think with Jack looking at him like this, looking his fill, incredulous and needing. Shit-scared. Looking and wanting, arousal biting, his eyes growing heavy, dilated to near black.

He couldn't help the odd noise he made in the back of his throat when Jack's mouth met his, not quite panic. Jack's lips were straight and strong, moulding themselves to his with warm, insistent pressure. Jack was learning him in taste and touch. Daniel couldn't read anything from him but need, pleasure - fear. He hesitantly opened to Jack's probing tongue, catching his breath as moist, limber heat plunged into him over and over, Jack's passion overwhelming any response Daniel might have made.

Daniel rode out this first urgent explosion of desire, though his jaw ached as Jack ravished and strove for more, deepening the kiss to eat Daniel alive. Jack broke off when they were both sobbing for breath, lay with his forehead against Daniel's, nuzzling restlessly into him as his breathing evened out and then he drove deeply into Daniel's mouth again, kissing him slowly this time, his stroking slow and sensuous, silky persuasion. Jack's hands moved caressingly over Daniel's back as he rhythmically rubbed their tongues together, smiling when Daniel responded to him, relaxing tentatively into the pleasure Jack wanted to share.

They lay together for a long time, kissing and kissing, Daniel's mind and body electric with pleasure, his own and Jack's. There would be more questions, more talking, but for now, this was as much as he could cope with. The reality of Jack's mouth and sure touch. Jack's love, and his own.

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It was the third time Daniel had awoken in as many days with his senses full of Jack. It was twilight, the room filled with many-hued light and pooling shadows. Stirring in the warmth and intimacy, Daniel looked up drowsily to find Jack waiting, watching him intently. "Do you know how long it's been since you touched me?" he asked quietly, making no move to get away.

*Since I fell in love with you.*

"Jack?" he asked hesitantly as Jack stretched out at his side, smiling a little as he slid his hand down to rest on Daniel's hip, held him as he fitted their bodies together.

*Easy, Daniel, Jack crooned. I want to touch, only that. I won't push for more than you'll give, I promise. Trust me?*

"Oh, God," Daniel gasped as Jack got hard against him.

*Is this what you want? Tell me. Do you want to make love? We could be so good together, Daniel. So good...*

Lulled by the soft voice in his mind, Daniel's breath caught as Jack's hips unsubtly pushed into his, all that weight and fierce, demanding heat he felt even through the sweats Jack had acquired. There was strength he'd never fully appreciated in Jack's lean frame. He didn't say no, the words wouldn't come, they didn't fit when Jack was so sure and Daniel wanted... "Oh, God," he gasped into Jack's shoulder, afraid for the first time as he felt Jack's erection throbbing against his hip.

Jack stared into Daniel's eyes, the look in his own eyes leaving Daniel shaken and wondering who was vulnerable here.

*Gorgeous. I can't believe you don't know that.*

Jack in his mind was slow and deliberate. Jack's fingers on his cheek were trembling.

*Let's make love, Daniel. Please. I've wanted you for so long.*

Jack kissed Daniel's brow, feeling the fine tremors wracking his body. He was sorry for that, but not for this, not for a chance. It was all he'd ever needed and he'd denied himself for so long. Daniel knew how it was for Jack, was badly shaken knowing, but he wasn't saying no.

"Kiss me?" Daniel asked with gentle dignity, reaching out to clasp his hands around Jack's shoulders.

*Ah, Daniel,* Jack kissed the frown wrinkling Daniel's forehead, nosing into his soft, fine hair. *You're doing great,* he encouraged. *Kissing you now.*

Daniel stirred, pedantry lifting his face to the perfect position. Jack tilted the stubborn chin and kissed him, smiling as his mouth moved over Daniel's, soft and warm, generous lips stiff against his, not mobile as they usually were. That would only come with confidence and a shit-load of thoroughly enjoyable practice.

*So sweet, Daniel.*

Daniel made a noise deep in his throat that sounded like a growl.

*Sweet and pissy,* Jack amended generously. And, God, he loved the shy thing. Loved it.

Shy? Feeling justifiably aggrieved, Daniel bit Jack on the lip. "Shy?" he snapped out in his embarrassment when Jack backed off a couple of inches, choking with amusement and something suspiciously like tenderness.

*Kiss me.*

Smiling a little, forgiving, Daniel opened to him, Jack sliding sinuously into his mouth. Daniel moaned from the blistering intimacy of it all, Jack's tongue resting over his own while Jack breathed gently into him.

*I'll rest your ass on my thighs and lift your legs over my shoulders, hold your hips steady while I rock into you for the first time. You'll feel me moving inside you, feel my skin slide against yours. It's good, you won't believe how good. I'll take you slow, and gentle, make it last. You'll feel me come inside you, I'll feel you. That's what we'll do, the first time we make love.*

*Two men can't be closer, Daniel.*

There hadn't been a lot of sex in Daniel's life. There had only been Sha'uri, who knew less of sex than he did. They'd had so little time, with the fears he had for getting her pregnant, the excavation and his researches. Always his research. His obsession always intruded, always ruled him, until Jack...

Daniel looked up at him involuntarily and for a moment, he was sure all of his uncertainty, every bit of it showed. He had no confidence in his ability to attract, to please. Then Jack's hand was there, cradling his cheek, every reassurance Daniel could ask right there in his eyes. Jack was in love with him. He loved Jack and his body was slowly gaining in acceptance of this, so he pulled Jack's face down to his and kissed him for the first time. A long, stunning glide brought him plunging deep into Jack's eager mouth, not resting, restless, thrusting and rasping clumsily over Jack's aggressive tongue.

It had been two and a half years since the last time Daniel had been kissed. Add a couple of years to that for the last time he'd made love.

He moaned as the kiss deepened, because Jack felt so much and couldn't or wouldn't hide it, it was in his kiss and the mind-voice and the feelings driving Daniel with every thrust of Jack's tongue against his, passionate, powerful feelings humbling him.

When Jack lifted his head a little, Daniel blindly followed, his hands clasping tight over Jack's neck to draw him back down, desperate for warmth, intimacy, pleasure.

Jack was surprised when Daniel pulled him back into the kiss. There was no way he'd take advantage of Daniel's vulnerability. Daniel knew that. Daniel knew him. He happened to be in love with the guy and he'd taken care for too long to wholly give in now. Daniel tugged at him again and he went with it, responding to the urgency boiling up from Daniel with his own pent-up frustrations. It was dangerous when his control was so tenuous and Daniel was just so – Daniel.

Fingers were digging bruisingly into his shoulders, clenching in his hair as they constantly shifted position, angling to deepen the slow, passionate kiss. Daniel's leg hooked around his butt and Jack went crazy, fingers fumbling at the waistband of Daniel's pants. The tiny gasp echoing as his hands pushed down to cup Daniel's ass made his dick throb. He groaned as Daniel's shirt rode free of the pants and his skin slid over the soft ridges of muscle on his flat, taut belly.

Daniel wasn't sure what he was feeling, just that it was too much...he was hot and achy, shivering convulsively as Jack shoved down his pants to free his sudden, aching erection. He cried out when Jack's hand closed over him, harsh and heavy, calluses rasping over his prickling skin, gripping him tight, too tight as he stroked and squeezed.

"Jack," Daniel whispered a protest, smothered by another desperate kiss, the passion between them escalating as Daniel's erection surged. He was giddy, panting for breath, shocked when Jack's weight shifted without warning, crying out when his dick was engulfed in hot, moist suction, Jack's limber tongue squeezing pressure against the head, rubbing. Jack was going down on him. Jack...

Jack sucked hard, once, twice and Daniel came, a strained cry stifled in his throat as his dick pumped luxuriously into Jack's mouth, the steady suction drawing his orgasm out, making him writhe with pleasure he almost confused with pain.

Daniel sprawled back, shuddering, limbs leaden, lassitude stealing over him as Jack's weight shifted again, sloppily returning the swift, fierce kiss as Jack's feelings sang in the air...

*Love you, Daniel, love you.*

"Jack."

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Daniel woke with a quiet mind and a familiar weight on his shoulder. When he stirred, Sam stirred too, straightening up with a jerk, sleepily rubbing her eyes to grin at him.

"Daniel," Sam sighed, relieved. "Welcome back. You scared the shit out of me," she accused him, still grinning.

"I could tell, the way you were using me for a pillow," Daniel retorted.

Sam's grin widened.

Janet swept in with a look on her face that said 'tests' and it was only then Daniel realised this wasn't right. He was alone in his head, in silence.

"Jack?" Daniel demanded anxiously, sitting up quickly to peer around.

"Here. What the hell is going on?" Jack snarled, surging up.

"You are not strong enough to sit, O'Neill," Teal'c said coldly, efficiently shoving Jack flat. "It is good to see you well again, DanielJackson," he said more gently, nodding gravely to Daniel. "We have kept watch over you for three days now."

"Three days?" Jack and Daniel said as one.

Daniel glanced at Jack for about a nanosecond, felt his face flame and slumped pathetically, realising an ugly truth. Horrifying as it was to be having frighteningly erotic dreams about Jack with Sam hovering solicitously at his side for three days, he couldn't begin to imagine the humiliation if Jack found out.

Jack could never find out.

"Your brain activity has been off the scale," Janet announced as she checked various arcane readings on her instrumentation, made notes on her clipboard, then went over to Jack's bedside. "It returned to established norms twelve hours ago. Apart from that, you're both in perfect health."

"And being unconscious for three days is what?" Jack asked witheringly.

"A bonus," Janet riposted tartly.

"Best guess? It was some kind of communication device you inadvertently triggered on the planet." Sam shrugged helplessly, hitching her chair back so she could look at both of her friends. "It wasn't designed for our physiology."

"I disagree," Teal'c corrected her gravely. "The device stimulated the parietal lobes - the sensory centre of the human brain - in both DanielJackson and Colonel O'Neill."

Janet shot him a look of surprised admiration. Teal'c bowed slightly, looking gratified.

"We have seen that the effects were temporary," Teal'c went on. "O'Neill's unusual brain activity..."

"Thank you," Jack interjected with heavy sarcasm.

"Mirrored that of DanielJackson's."

"You're suggesting the device boosted reception, for want of a better description," Sam pulled a face, "in the parietal lobes of their brains to facilitate some kind of ESP or telepathic communication?"

"God, I hope not," Jack muttered.

"Indeed."

"Telepathy?" Daniel bleated, blushing again, so off-balance he felt as if he were falling.

"What the aliens could not share with other species in their language, they could share in images or feelings," Teal'c persisted.

"I don't think that's possible, Teal'c," Sam frowned.

"Me either!" Jack agreed so emphatically Daniel shot a surprised look at him. "I've got nothing on my mind anyone wants to hear," Jack stated, scowling unequivocally.

"Nothing."

"It's easy to test the theory," Sam added brightly, ignoring this. "What did you dream while you were unconscious? Daniel? Sir?"

"Nothing," Daniel denied hastily, miserably self-conscious. Knowing he was a pathetically bad liar, he refused to look at anyone.

"What he said," Jack snapped. "Nada. Zip. Zilch."

"How's our boy?" George hailed them from the door as he walked in, beaming at Daniel.

Jack figured the shock would kill him if Hammond breezed into the Infirmary asking after his safety and welfare. Could the man dote less obviously? It was right there in the damn regulations. Senior officers will not dote on civilian consultants no matter how sweet and how – goddammit! - how gorgeous they are. There was probably an entire book on how a senior officer couldn't lie on his ass for three days having wet dreams about going down on said civilian consultant.

"Perfect health?" he prompted Fraiser, who was reading something on one of her infernal machines.

"Every test confirms it," Janet frowned from her instruments to her patients. "I'll take another PET scan of each of you. If your brain activity continues at its current level, I see no reason why I can't discharge you. I'd advise rest today. Report back here at 0700 for another PET scan." She looked up at Hammond. "Sir? I'd recommend light duties for at least forty-eight hours. I want to monitor Dr. Jackson and Colonel O'Neill with PET scans every twelve hours."

"Agreed. It's wise to be cautious," Hammond nodded. "Major? I believe SG-5 are in need of your assistance."

Sam pulled a face at Daniel and stifled a sigh. "Yes, Sir. On my way." She didn't move, though. "Do you think we'll ever know what the alien technology was for?"

Jack huffed impatiently. "You think we'll ever care?" he countered sarcastically.

Recognising the futility of argument, Sam gave up, walking slowly over to the door, where she smiled back at Daniel. "Call me if you need anything," she crisply ordered.

"Promise," Daniel called after her, feeling guilty that he was lying to her and to all of them, and fully intended to go on doing so. He was not willing to expose himself and he would under no circumstances expose Jack to damaging sexual innuendo. He had his limits and well he knew it.

"Colonel? Doctor? I look forward to hearing your report about your - experience - at 0800 tomorrow," Hammond ordered them cheerfully.

Daniel acknowledged this with a palpable lack of enthusiasm, Jack assenting with an ill-tempered grunt. It seemed neither of them had anything they were willing to say about their experience.

"Doctor Fraiser? A word?" Hammond graciously allowed Janet to precede him, then followed her out.

"My presence is required by SG-3," Teal'c informed them as he joined the stampede out the door.

"That's it?" Jack incredulously. "Three days in a sinister alien-induced coma and that's all the fanfare we get?"

Daniel had had all the fanfare he could stand. He couldn't even look Jack in the mouth.

Eye.

God.

"Something like this happens just about every week, Jack," he said pacifically. Jack's scorching glare made him wonder why he'd bothered.

He hovered anxiously by his bed while Jack sprawled and feigned sleep. When the nurse appeared with their street clothes, Jack moved so quickly he made her jump.

After laying his clothes neatly on the bed, the strained silence was too much for him. Daniel took a deep breath and darted a glance behind him just in time to catch Jack turning pointedly around. Any desire to talk, apologise, he didn't know quite what he wanted, or even had, to offer, died. He was reeling emotionally and he kept his mouth shut. They dressed in uneasy silence, backs turned.

"Will I see you later?" Daniel asked quietly.

"I doubt it," Jack tossed off his reply carelessly, not even looking around. "You don't have a TV."

They walked out of the Infirmary, not exactly together, but not exactly apart. It was awkward. Daniel didn't know which was worse, fantasising about his closest friend and

de facto commanding officer going down on him, or the fact he was so patently desperate to get some, he thought with mordant humour, he'd managed to fantasise lasting nanoseconds before he came.

There was nothing funny about this. Daniel was conscious only of the need to get home and to try to process this bizarre, bolt from the blue homoerotic fantasy. His desire for solitude was desperate. He'd learned too much about himself in the dream and he remembered it too clearly. The memories came so thick and so fast, he was drowning in them, so real he wasn't sure he would ever be the same again.

He found himself watching Jack as they headed towards the elevator, wondering why, if he had to have homoerotic fantasies at this stage in his life, they absolutely had to feature Colonel O'Neill. Of all the admirable qualities he admired Jack for, he could honestly say being good in bed had never featured anywhere on the list. Ever.

Very good. It was about two and half years since he'd even been kissed, so maybe his standards weren't particularly high to start with, but in his experience, Jack was the best - if briefest - time he'd ever had in bed. It really didn't say much about his love life when one of his two lovers was imaginary.

A guy, absolutely.

His boss, technically.

His friend, his closest friend, allegedly.

He was so fucked.

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Not even a stiff shot of bourbon had helped Jack to come up with any kind of spin on his coma extravaganza. There was no possible way to pass off giving his linguist head as anything but what it was. A pathetic, middle-aged porno fantasy.

The worst thing was, after all the ways he'd imagined making love with Daniel, the best he could come up with for the Technicolor-wide screen-Dolby stereo version was the aftermath of his fifteenth birthday when the president of the goddamn Chess Club mated him then blew him and he lasted all of about ten seconds. He'd had a year of chess tuition and still couldn't play chess. Go figure.

Jack was determinedly sticking with the amnesia line, and if he got cornered, he was going for 'the aliens made me do it'.

He was so depressed he didn't even have the energy to drink himself into oblivion. Maybe a shower would help, hot water, suds, jerking off over another warm, wet and willing Daniel fantasy.

He heard a car pulling into his drive, looked at the clock - it was almost midnight - and hated himself for having to make himself sit and wait for Daniel - it had to be Daniel, no one else would turn up at midnight - to actually knock at his door. It was his own damn fault. He was the one who fell in love with the man.

Jack loped up the steps keeping time with the soft taps at his door. He pulled it open to find Daniel nervous in tight jeans and a really cool-looking navy sweater that clung every place he shouldn't look, the soft collar falling open to bare the hollow of his throat.

Daniel sidled edgily into the house, Jack closed the door behind him and they stood looking at one another. Jack couldn't think of a thing to say. He was ridiculously happy to have Daniel with him and was feeling about as cool as a schoolgirl with a crush.

"I wanted to talk to you about the dream I had," Daniel said quietly, watching him gravely. "The one where I heard your thoughts."

Jack shrugged and waited, refusing to show anything. So he'd had a similar dream. So what? Wasn't a man entitled to the privacy of the inside of his own head.

"I was thinking about what you said."

Jack didn't think he'd said anything, so why was Daniel looking at him like that? Like he had his heart in his mouth?

"I do have a TV, Jack," Daniel announced bravely, his head coming up. "It's right there in my bedroom."

"A portable," Jack retorted, sneering. "A portable isn't a real..."

Daniel nodded jerkily, almost smiling, and then the penny dropped.

The only good thing was that Daniel went as red as he did, about as fast as he did, and paled just as suddenly.

"You couldn't tell me you were in love with me?" Daniel asked breathily, with difficulty, not needing any more confirmation.

Nor did Jack. He didn't know how, or why, or who, but it seemed Teal'c was right. He and Daniel, they'd had the same dream. They'd shared the dream.

The dream.

"Jesus Christ," Jack whispered, all the care he'd taken for himself, for them both, crumbling down around him.

"You couldn't tell me?" Daniel said again.

It was so close to what he'd said in the dream, so close. They both remembered. They knew it all.

At Daniel's dignified refusal to back down, Jack shuddered convulsively, his mouth gaping open, looking at Daniel without really seeing, moving because he couldn't find the words, had only this one answer to give. He cupped Daniel's jaw in a fierce clasp and pulled him close, met him more than halfway and kissed him, swallowing whatever Daniel had been about to say and driving into him in a fury of passion. Daniel rocked back, stumbling as Jack's tongue plunged into his mouth, hands coming up instinctively to curl around his wrists as he pinned Daniel against the wall.

Jack heard and tasted Daniel's soft gasp as his blood slammed down and he was hard against him, hips pushing into him as his tongue stroked and squeezed Daniel's. He was angry and scared, aggressive with long denial, roughly parting Daniel's legs to rub his thigh against his crotch, insufferably smug when long fingers clenched suddenly over his wrists in reaction as Daniel swelled against him.

He was too angry to be still, mouth moving over Daniel's, restless, demanding, constantly angling to deepen the kiss, determined to provoke a response. He knew the passion Daniel was capable of and he wanted it, he wanted everything.

The sudden warmth of Daniel's hand cupping the nape of his neck gentled him like nothing else could, his own arms sliding down to lock around the small of Daniel's back. A quick, snatched breath and he caught Daniel as he was carefully moving his head from the wall, sank into him, sensuous now, subtle and lingering as the warm, mobile lips moved against his at last, Daniel's tongue sliding silkily beneath him.

They kissed slowly, endlessly, eating one another's mouths, Daniel's hand coming to rest at Jack's waist, one foot hooked around his as he rubbed himself against Jack's thigh, his breath catching.

When Jack had no choice but to break off and gulp down some air, he got the distinct impression he was the only thing holding Daniel up. He almost came in his jeans when Daniel dreamily licked his lips, tasting Jack on him.

"Prick."

The quiet condemnation came off as a compliment. Jack summoned up a smile Daniel couldn't see with his eyes screwed shut.

As scared as Jack was, Daniel didn't want to face reality. A few more minutes quality time with Jack's leg and..."Hey!" He opened his eyes, scowling as two large, warm hands cupped his ass possessively and squeezed.

"This is the part where I try to get you to go to bed with me," Jack pointed out helpfully.

"Does it look like I'm saying no?" Daniel asked sarcastically. He was wrapped round Jack, still wheezing from the most thorough kissing he'd ever had in his life and shamelessly humping his best friend's leg.

"Thank Christ!" Jack groaned. He swung Daniel round suddenly, his arms tightening as he backed him down the hallway one step at a time. And with lots of incidental rubbing.

"You're in love with me?" Daniel insisted stubbornly, focusing on the only thing he felt capable of dealing with.

Jack's response was to nibble his ear, which felt good, and lick a warm trail down his throat, which felt better, then start kissing, which felt absolutely..."Oh, God," Daniel sighed, arching his neck encouragingly.

"Yes," Jack murmured into the hollow of Daniel's throat as he backed him into the bedroom. He surged up to kiss Daniel again, biting at his lips. "Yes." Daniel's knees hit the edge of the bed. "I'm in love with you." He plucked off Daniel's glasses. "What about you? Why did you come here tonight?" He squeezed Daniel's ass as he rocked into him, let him feel exactly how turned on he was. It took Jack a moment to hook Daniel's ankle, get him off balance and sprawling, his weight taking him down to the bed. "Good sex? Is that what you want?"

Daniel arched helplessly as Jack rolled easily between his thighs and rocked into him, grinding their hips together. "Mmmm," Daniel sighed dazedly, teeth clenched tight against the ache of heavy pleasure panging low in his belly and the insistent throb of his dick. "But I came here because I meant what I said. I love you."

Jack reared up to stare at him, his mouth working soundlessly.

"I won't let you leave me again, Jack."

"Wasn't planning to," Jack retorted, smiling cockily in what he suspected was a vain attempt to disguise his sickening rush of relief. "If we said everything we needed to in the dream, does that mean we don't have to talk now?" he asked hopefully.

"No."

Crap.

"Not if you want us to go on," Daniel said carefully, not quite asking. "If you want us to be together."

"I'm in love with you," Jack said at once. "Of course I goddamned do!" Daniel's sudden smile was all the answer he needed.

"Do you want to make love?" Daniel asked shyly, slipping his hand into Jack's.

"Do you?" Jack winced at his own banality. He was much better at this stuff when Daniel was reading his mind. "You know how much I want you," he added meaningfully. Daniel blushed delightfully. "I'm aware of how royally I've fucked up things between us. I mean, I'll understand if you don't want to." Why was it so goddamned hard to spit this stuff out? "We don't have to rush the physical side of things," he offered with real heroism, dragging his eyes away from Daniel, sprawling on his bed. "I know you're inexperienced."

"It doesn't help my confidence for you to keep reminding me," Daniel snapped, his flush deepening.

Jack decided Daniel was pretty okay about having sex with him when he sat up, kicked his sneakers half way across the bedroom, then started unbuttoning his jeans. Jack's dick had been painfully with the programme since Daniel got here, so it was something of a relief to roll off his bed and undress, which they both did with as much finesse and sex appeal as the average pre-mission gearing-up.

"Embarrassed?" Jack asked sympathetically. Daniel's shoulders jerked - his back was resolutely turned to Jack as he undressed, which was also pretty usual. "Me too," Jack sighed.

"Really?" Daniel asked, turning to face Jack, looking a tad more relaxed. "I thought it...I...oh. Um." Daniel's gaze was riveted at hip height. His mouth dropped open. Jack was less embarrassed than Daniel in the sense he'd taken off more clothes.

Jack noticed him - noticing - and noticed right back.

"You're really very attracted to me, aren't you?" Daniel asked weakly. "Very."

Jack stood with his hands on his hips, dropped his chin to rest on his chest, joining Daniel in gazing at his dick in silent contemplation. "Is that a rhetorical question?" he asked as Daniel slid into bed, still in his sweater and underwear.

"I've never really looked at another guy naked," Daniel muttered vaguely, making up for it as Jack slid gracefully into bed. He rolled onto his side and nudged the duvet down so he could keep looking. Jack was long. Lean. Rangy. Plenty of muscle in what he had to agree were the right places, his eye drawn naturally down the strong, clean lines to Jack's hips.

Jack was philosophically awaiting the inevitable. Daniel wasn't so much the nervous virgin - more or less a technicality after their in-dream action - as the insatiably curious explorer. One swift glance was enough to tell him Daniel was absolutely fascinated.

One gentle finger traced the outline of his bicep. A whole hand slid over his ribs, fingers splayed, resting, just feeling him breathe. Shyness momentarily forgotten, Daniel hitched closer.

Jack rolled to meet him, slid an arm round his shoulders and hugged him in close. He was completely disarmed when Daniel tentatively rested his head on his shoulder, as if he weren't sure of his welcome. Jack got a nose full of silky hair, and Daniel got to explore the contours of his hip.

Daniel took this to heart and started rubbing Jack's stomach, smoothing his fingers over the still respectable ridges of muscle. "Daaan-iel," Jack drawled a warning, peeling Daniel's hand away. He was treated to one of Daniel's sullen pouts and then they were kissing, Daniel endearingly enthusiastic about it all, eagerly slipping his arms around Jack's shoulders as they got comfortable.

Jack was doomed. He knew this. He was rolling around in a big, comfortable bed with the gorgeous guy he was in love with plastered to him, wholeheartedly getting it on with him. There was no possible way they could avoid having sex at this point, especially with those tiny moans that kept getting away from Daniel as he nuzzled his throat. Jack let his fingers do the walking, stroking Daniel's thigh.

Daniel frowned at Jack's hand, then let it go when Jack licked his lips for him, sucked his tongue into his mouth and started nibbling it. Daniel in fact rubbed up against him like a cat begging to be petted and Jack happily obliged, gliding over the long, taut muscle of his thigh to his hip. Jack decided they were in no rush to dispose of Daniel's sweater. It was warm and soft and kind of fun to sneak his hands under it and onto warmer, softer skin.

"I love you," Daniel groaned when Jack let him breathe.

Jack answered this by slipping his hand between them to rub against Daniel's crotch. Daniel moaned out again, pushing his hips restlessly up into him. "Me too, Daniel, more than you know," Jack whispered tenderly, nosing the collar of the shirt aside to kiss Daniel's shoulder as he massaged his straining erection. When Jack snuck his hand around to squeeze Daniel's ass, they got a lot closer, hip to hip closer.

As much as he was capable of thinking anything with all this weight and strength rubbing rhythmically over his body, Daniel did wonder what he was doing, if he was rushing things a little. He had been conscious even in the dream they needed to talk. That was his intention when he came here, to talk, to tell Jack how he felt, how much he needed him. He wondered even more when Jack decided his briefs were in the way and instead of stopping the extraction and getting ready to talk sense, he obligingly hitched up his butt and assisted in the disposal operation. It all got a lot more interesting when Jack rolled on top of him, his pounding erection slick and hot stroking over Daniel's own.

Whatever hazy protests his mind was stuttering over about doing the mature, rational relationship thing, his body was emphatically in favour of being touched, moving against

Jack's roving hands and mouth. He didn't make the decision this was a good time to hook his leg around Jack's waist and see just how close they could get, his leg was simply there.

He did choose to pull Jack up to him for another long, deep passionate kiss, but the quivering in his thighs, the shake deep inside, that was Jack, that was *all* Jack, Jack on him. Jack *moving*. Slowly into him and over him, the sleek, sensuous sliding of skin on skin as they touched and held and kissed.

When he was slick with sweat and fighting for breath, Daniel wrapped both legs around Jack's back and clung, his fingers slipping on Jack's broad shoulders, waves of dizzying, prickling pleasure rippling through him.

It was odd how with all Jack was feeling, the look on Daniel's face, his innocent, trusting pleasure, held him absolutely. Daniel was shaken and still beneath him, giving himself over to Jack, totally out of his depth and unafraid to show it. Jack would still and just hold him, they would kiss, Daniel would calm enough to go on, his hand cupping Jack's cheek as he rocked their bodies slowly together.

It wasn't quick and it wasn't easy, no heated rush, just that gentle, wondering look on Daniel's face and the innate, giving sweetness of the man as they made love.

As much as he wanted it to last, Jack pushed too far, too often and Daniel convulsed beneath him, shoulders arching from the bed, his dick jerking hard against Jack as he came in slow, satisfying pulses. The soft splash of semen against his groin drove Jack over the edge into blinding orgasm.

They lay close, Daniel trembling, both of them quiet, suddenly sobered by the enormity of what they'd done, and with no fucking idea what they were going to do.

Jack was certain of only thing. Now he had him, he wasn't about to let Daniel go.

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Jack made it to the contents page of Carter's latest report on the assumption that anything written about magnetic wind had to be funny. The 'executive summary' - known to all the non-scientists as the Mickey Mouse bit - alone was enough to prove him wrong. He made an executive decision to go hang out in Daniel's office in order to facilitate the checking out of Daniel's six and to see how often he could make him blush. He'd got the first blush of the day at 0530, when he kissed Daniel awake.

To say Daniel was confused to wake up naked - except for his sweater - in Jack's bed with Jack - also naked - was an understatement. Jack wasn't taking the little distressed bleat of 'ohmygodmyreportisdue!' personally. He let Daniel make like the Road Runner, secure in the knowledge he'd be back by his side at 0700 for the PET scan, and 0800 for the de-

briefing. Daniel had avoided his eyes and blushed throughout. Fraiser took Daniel's temperature three times, and Hammond kept having to remind him what he was saying.

Jack found the whole thing cute as hell. A few hours had elapsed, Daniel was no doubt hiding in some translation of something or other, thinking he was safe from molestation, so it was time to go stalking, take his linguist out to lunch and talk plans for tonight. Like where he was taking Daniel out to dinner and whether it was more convenient to take Daniel home or just make love at his place in town.

Weighing up the pros and cons of taking Daniel straight home to bed the minute they clocked off whiled away the trip down from his office to Daniel's lab. On the upside, they could spend the whole evening in bed and he could accelerate Daniel right up the guy/guy learning curve. After mature consideration, Jack decided there was no downside.

He stood at the doorway of the lab for a while in absolute silence, just watching Daniel work, the sweet curve of his nape as he bent over the books in fierce concentration, writing steadily. He'd never known anyone who came close to having Daniel's attention span, his ability to soak up information like a sponge. When he read, Daniel was worlds away.

Jack eased the door closed, walked noiselessly across the office, checked that the hallway on the other side of the lab was also clear, leaned in and gently kissed Daniel's nape. Daniel jumped violently and his pen went flying across the room.

"Miss me?" Jack asked happily, hitching his butt up on the desk while Daniel hyperventilated. "Breathe, Daniel, breathe," he advised kindly, beaming as the colour surged in Daniel's cheeks. "Soooo, he drawled hypnotically. "Where d'you want to go for dinner tonight?"

"It's not enough we..." Daniel peered around cautiously. "Slept together," he mouthed.

Jack obligingly leaned in closer to hear him and incidentally breathe him in ecstatically.

Daniel leaned back. "Now you want to - to..." Words failed him. He really hadn't thought that far ahead. Not that he hadn't been trying to think about the mature relationship things. He had. Unfortunately, the making love part kept ambushing him.

"Date you," Jack supplied helpfully. "So? Tonight? Italian? I like Italian. Or we could just go home." He beamed at Daniel. "And sleep together again."

A sharp pang of desire spiked low in Daniel's belly as a vivid memory of their lovemaking struck him. Of all things, the hair on Jack's thighs chafing between his. He glanced up uneasily to find Jack watching him in a manner he could only describe as doting. He didn't dare ask if this was characteristic of Jack in, um, love. "Jack!" he hissed, slightly alarmed as Jack eyed him thoughtfully, then jumped up and closed the other office door.

"We need some privacy."

"Jack!" Daniel complained breathlessly. "I need to work - the general is expecting this report by 1700."

"Quit your whining," Jack ordered briskly, neatly catching Daniel around the waist as he jumped up to back him gently but inexorably to the door. He then planted his hands hard against it on either side of Daniel's face.

Daniel swallowed. All things considered, doting was not that big a deal. He could live with doting. The whole incredulous 'you're mine, get over it, going to eat you alive, little boy' thing, that, that was challenging.

"Um."

Jack leaned into him and Daniel's furious blush kept pace exactly with the swell of Jack's erection against him. Staring into his eyes, Jack simply stood close, breathing against his mouth, gently stroking his hair in a gesture as intimate as a kiss, rolling the strands between his fingers.

"We're good together, Daniel," Jack said gently. He remembered telling Daniel this in the dream but it felt right to say it now. He knew there was a lot more he needed to say, but Daniel was generous enough to give him the time he needed. He was a lucky, undeserving bastard. He knew that. "We've always been good together," he whispered, like a promise. They were lost apart. They both knew that. He leaned in to kiss the corner of Daniel's jaw, smiled as he heard Daniel's breath catch, kissed a little lower on his throat, the smile widening as Daniel's hands suddenly caught at his shoulders. "God, I love you."

Daniel appeared to be speechless so Jack kissed him again, suckling on the sensitive skin as Daniel got hard, fast. He was enchanted to discover that when Daniel got turned on he liked to get close, the 'in Jack's clothes with him' kind of close, one long leg wrapping around his. He remembered this from last night and could only be glad it was habit forming.

It seemed only fair to positively reinforce this, so he kissed Daniel chastely on the lips. When he leaned back after a moment or two, Daniel followed, keeping his mouth against Jack's.

"This is insane," Daniel complained. "What am I supposed to tell the general?"

Manfully shouldering the blame for apparently being irresistible to Daniel, Jack made encouraging noises.

"We shouldn't be doing this on base."

Daniel kissed him somewhat nervously, as if he might bite, leaned back, processed his own response, then tried it again. He kept looking at Jack's face, which made Jack wonder uneasily how much of what he was feeling showed.

The third time Daniel kissed him, Jack clamped his hands on Daniel's ass and pulled him into a passionate kiss. He signified his wholehearted approval when Daniel responded with a little tentative nibbling on his tongue, then grabbed his ass.

Daniel sighed and just melted into him when he deepened the kiss, which was the perfect time for the goddamned phone to ring. They weaved drunkenly over to the phone, Jack obligingly fumbling behind him for the handset, which he handed to Daniel, then he nuzzled at Daniel's throat while he gasped 'hello'. Probably Carter.

"General!" Daniel whimpered. He was completely impressed when Jack calmly took the phone from him and achieved conversational coherence, despite the fact Daniel was fondling his ass.

"Yes, Sir! Checking him out right now," Jack rapped out authoritatively, pausing to lick Daniel's ear while he listened to Hammond's response. Then he hung up. And grinned.

The grin was evil.

"Apparently I have been remiss in my duties as team leader. Your physical evaluation is overdue."

"No, it isn't," Daniel argued. "Janet ran me into the ground last week."

"Not the physical," Jack sneered. "Hand to hand!"

Or mouth to mouth. Whaa - what the hell was he doing? "What am I doing?"

"Getting physical," Jack said dreamily. "Sweaty. Showering."

Showering? Daniel's treacherous hormones liked the idea of Jack slippery, wet and pliant. A lot.

This appeared to be mutual.

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His ass smacked into the mat for the tenth time, Jack's weight pinning him, his wrists held either side of his face. "You like this!" he accused indignantly as Jack pushed subtly into him. He could feel how much Jack liked this.

"Relax," Jack gloated. "You passed."

"How?" Daniel asked blankly. He'd never...Jack must have gone easy on him all the other times because this time he was ten for ten for being knocked on his behind. Not that there

was much actual knocking. Jack refused to hit him. He was having a lot more fun wrestling Daniel to the ground and keeping him sprawled there as long as possible between bouts.

This wasn't nearly as annoying as the gloating.

Or his own undeniable physical response. He quite liked this too. If it wasn't for the fact there wasn't a door on this particular storeroom-cum-dojō, he would have been clamped to Jack like a limpet, pushing the pleasurable possibilities of mutually consenting friction to the full.

He looked up. Jack looked down. They both stilled and looked, kept on looking, losing it, losing themselves.

Daniel had never really looked into Jack's eyes, not stared. He hadn't appreciated what beautiful eyes Jack had. He'd never felt this fierce pang of want go through him at the look in Jack's eyes, tender and hungry at the same time.

"Italian sounds good," he blurted. Jack's face twisted hard on palpable relief, then pure pleasure surged. Daniel's heart skipped a beat.

"It's a date," Jack gloated.

Apparently so.

"We can go back to your place and make love," Jack whispered happily, looking almost shy. "First we shower."

Desire panged again, deep and heavy. Putty in Jack's experienced hands, Daniel swallowed painfully, able only to nod assent.

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Daniel wasn't surprised to feel a hot swipe at the nape of his neck, or the arms sliding around him. He was surprised all Jack wanted was to hold him, urging his head back to rest on his shoulder, his heartbeat a steady drum against Daniel's back, stronger than the drum of the water raining down over his skin. Steamy heat surrounded them and warmth flowed between them. Daniel leaned into the embrace, knowing it would please Jack. He was committed now, and Jack knew it.

"Hey."

The gentle whisper tugged a smile out of Daniel. He reached up to rest his hands on Jack's forearms, crossed over his chest. Jack kissed his shoulder.

They stood like that, not saying much, Daniel at least needing to get used to being so close, intimate, touching. He loved being with Jack, far more than he'd suspected was possible, but his comfort level was still at the climbing out of his own skin stage. Daniel sensed he was under Jack's skin permanently, so maybe it evened out. There was so much he didn't know, wasn't sure he wanted or maybe needed to know, or even if he could get Jack to tell him.

Jack slid a hand down his skin to rub his belly, low, below his navel. Daniel was achingly hard in seconds, catching his breath as desire surged. He moaned as Jack increased the pressure, massaging into his groin. The same electric pleasure shook through him, his thighs trembling. Jack's broad fingers stroked down to close confidently over his dick. Daniel cried out with the shock of it as his whole body spasmed, as he came hard from that single touch, jerking and spurting into Jack's waiting hand. He slumped, Jack holding him up, murmuring wordless, slightly complacent reassurance.

"That has to be the hottest thing I've ever seen," Jack remarked conversationally.

Daniel pulled away from him, rubbed his hands impatiently over his face, then turned around. Jack looked him over slowly, blatantly and comprehensively, his appreciative smile widening.

"Do you have any idea how gorgeous you are?" Jack asked matter-of-factly.

No, and he didn't think Jack should be, well, talking about him like this. Of course Jack also had to look like he couldn't believe his luck too, so Daniel couldn't register a dignified protest, even when Jack registered his opinion of Daniel's eyes. His mouth, too, something about his mouth made Jack go to his Happy Place.

Daniel smiled slowly. He'd always been an excellent student.

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"Spaghetti Bolognese," the airman behind the counter said laconically. "Just like it says on the board."

Jack watched Daniel struggle with it, torn between a desire to correct the man and guilt over possibly hurting his feelings. He lent an assist. "You fooled him completely by not having any spaghetti in it."

"It's penne," Daniel supplied helpfully.

"Burger and fries," Jack ordered crisply. Daniel ordered the pasta bake, which looked good in a creamy, tomatoey way. Jack had fries. He could dip. Ignoring Daniel's meaningful glance at the cartons of salad, Jack shuddered and peered around him at the desserts. Daniel frowned. Jack picked out strawberry cheesecake for them both,

optimistic about the odds of Daniel actually eating his. Daniel retaliated by getting them both mineral water instead of coke.

They wove their way through the tables to sit as far from the bored airman serving as possible.

"Yours is Italian," Jack observed mildly, gesturing at Daniel's plate with his fork. "And we are eating dinner together."

"On base," Daniel said sullenly, wondering when he'd turned into a slut. Much of the uncertainty he'd had about sex with Jack had vanished instantly when he found out he couldn't have him. "Quarantine drills," he complained bitterly.

"It could have been worse," Jack said grimly. "We're lucky we were early fatalities. Carter is in the Infirmary right now making like a lab rat while Teal'c is acting all noble and theatrically suffering in an oxygen tent surrounded by hormonally charged nurses. The damn base is almost deserted and we still can't go home."

Daniel pushed his pasta round his plate unenthusiastically. What was the point of bulking up on carbs when he wouldn't get the chance to work them off?

Jack heaved a sigh and took a small, distasteful bite of his burger. He chewed stoically, getting way more enjoyment out of watching Daniel pout.

"Do you think we're doing the right thing?" Daniel fretted. "About the technology, I mean."

"So much to worry over, so little time," Jack said ironically, rolling his eyes at Daniel.

"Teal'c was right about it. Somehow, I don't know how, we shared a dream. The whole experience." Daniel's eyes were worried and regretful. "I did hear your thoughts." Conflicted, Daniel sat back, biting his lip. "Didn't I?"

Despite himself, Jack melted. "We did have stimulated lobes," he conceded.

"Shouldn't we tell..."

"Tell who? Tell them what? We stumbled into an alien lurve machine?"

Daniel's mouth fell open.

"Because that's all that happened," Jack reminded him forcefully. "That wasn't some mystical mumbo-jumbo jive. We didn't reveal the innermost depths of the human experience or anything. We didn't even conveniently reveal the iris codes or the colour of Hammond's underwear. We just..." he lowered his voice conspiratorially, despite the Marie-Celeste ambience of the Commissary. "Got it on."

Daniel blushed.

"Together."

Daniel's blush deepened.

Jack thought about the sex they'd had. He thought hard. And long. Then he reconsidered his position. "Okay, so maybe it was the innermost depths of our particular human experience," he relented, smiling at Daniel, who gulped.

"How deserted?"

The hoarse, conspiratorial whisper took Jack by surprise. "What?" he said blankly.

Daniel leaned in to the centre of the table. Jack leaned in too. Daniel went even more red, if that were possible, swallowed hard and leaned closer. "How deserted is the base?" he asked again, looking at Jack meaningfully and somewhat nervously.

Desiring only to be supportive in this time of need, Jack leaned closer too. "Are you making a pass?" He was delighted, if only because they were letting the thorny issue of embarrassingly functional alien technology to drop.

Daniel looked around. "Maybe," he hissed.

"Pretty damn deserted, I'd say," Jack promptly replied with all the natural authority of his twenty-mumble-mumble years in the military. Daniel's flush didn't exactly subside, but he did manage to choke down some pasta and he kept looking at Jack in a slightly hopeful, slightly scared, very Daniel way that said 'cheque please!'

It was ridiculous at Jack's age, but he managed to get a surreptitious foot hooked round Daniel's ankle while he wolfed down his burger and with his resuscitated appetite, assisted Daniel to eat his pasta. His fries were good dipped in the creamy tomatoey stuff. Daniel retaliated by shoving the pasta over to him and eating both pieces of cheesecake while Jack was chasing the last bit of sauce round the plate with his last bite of burger.

Jack's protest was stifled when Daniel announced that he was tired. Very tired. And needed, he paused with pantomime significance, sleep. Now. Jack gallantly escorted him out of the commissary, glad there weren't more airmen around to put two and two together and see him make Daniel, given it was only 1930 hours.

"This is stupid," Jack commented pleasantly as they strolled along to the elevator. "And dangerous," he added as he punched fourteen for the living quarters.

Daniel nodded thoughtfully, as if they were discussing a mission.

When the elevator arrived, they stood on opposite sides of the car, staring at the walls and sneaking surreptitious peeks at each other.

"Do you know what you're doing?" Jack asked.

"No."

"But you're doing it anyway?"

"Yes."

Fair enough, Jack thought. He didn't know either. He was good on the sex but slow on the relationship side. He'd never actually had a guy, not in the relationship sense. It amused him to think Daniel was as much his first as he was Daniel's.

They walked off the elevator and down the hallway of SG-1's allotted living quarters on base in slightly surreal, definitely strained silence. It wouldn't be the first time Jack had bunked with Daniel before a mission. Not at 1930, true, and looking at it optimistically, the rumour mill had him banging everyone on his team anyway so what was a little more grist between consenting adults?

Jack took down the roster that hung on the wall of Corridor C, marked his and Daniel's names down with his usual scrawl to claim their regular two-bunk concrete Hilton. He didn't believe Daniel wasn't going to bolt until he locked the door behind them and Daniel walked right up to him, stretched up and kissed him, arms coming up at once to wrap tightly around his neck.

He turned them, backing Daniel towards the bunks, peeling his blue jacket off his shoulders as they kissed with closed mouths and quiet affection. Daniel reciprocated, delighting him by tugging at his T-shirt until he freed it. They broke off long enough to toss their T-shirts onto the floor and shuck their boots and socks without fuss, coming together again to fall onto the bunk in a warm tangle of mouths, skin and legs.

"I want you," Daniel whispered, turning his face into Jack's cupping hand to kiss his palm.

Such a sweet man he'd landed. Didn't know how to play games or hurt people. "I'm a lucky bastard," Jack whispered back, smiling a little as Daniel reached out to him, his fingers gentle and curious on Jack's skin. He didn't have a thought in his head but pleasing Daniel, holding him close, stroking his back and sides. "Kiss me?" he invited softly. Daniel nodded shakily and pulled him down into another lingering embrace. They lay side by side, moving their mouths softly over one another.

"I'm conflicted," Daniel murmured against his mouth, all wide-eyed solemnity, then he wrapped his leg around Jack's.

"I feel your pain," Jack agreed obligingly.

Daniel slowly reached for Jack's hand, pulling it to rest against his crotch. Jack got with the programme instantly, kissing Daniel's throat and jaw as he rhythmically rubbed him up the right way.

"Jack," Daniel sighed, moving his hips achingly as he swelled against Jack's hand. The kneading pressure lifted for a moment as Jack expertly unbuckled, unbuttoned and unzipped. He pushed Daniel's BDUs down and rubbed his belly as he closed in for another lingering kiss. Daniel opened to him this time, touching his tongue to Jack's, smiling as Jack stroked eagerly into his mouth, breathed into him.

He'd never imagined Jack was so romantic. He should have known there would be affection for Jack's lover; at one time there had been too much for Jack's friend. He wasn't the right person for Jack's exuberant physicality. He was too self-conscious, too contained. He stirred and Jack lifted his head enquiringly. Daniel wondered if Jack had any idea how reassuring that was, to respond instinctively to his slightest mood when he really didn't know what he was doing, when this could spin out of control so quickly.

"Is shy sexy?" he asked, not joking. It was time to stop this rollercoaster ride he'd climbed on, time to face the reality of having sex with his friend. He was still fucked in lots of ways that counted, ways that came with consequences. They both were.

Euphoria was dangerous.

"You're sexy," Jack said simply. "Don't you know?" he asked in turn, curious and amused.

Daniel shook his head.

Jack hitched up to look at him, the heel of his hand pushing low into Daniel's belly. He leaned in to swipe his tongue over a nipple, the sensation shocking down to Daniel's dick, fully erect and throbbing in moments as Jack tongued and suckled. He quivered from head to foot as Jack's hand closed on his dick, his thumb curving confidently to massage circles on the underside.

"Do you want...?" Daniel wasn't sure how to phrase it. Jack had thought 'fucking' at him in the mind-voice of their dream, but it was too harsh for the gentle hands and tender mouth moving over his skin. "You know?" he offered awkwardly, looking away.

Jack made an impatient sound into the shoulder he was kissing.

"Make love," Daniel said stoically, stroking his fingers over Jack's shoulders in turn. Jack went very still, then dropped his head back onto the pillow to search his face.

"I'm not that pushy," Jack said carefully. "I do - of course I do." He pushed his hips into Daniel, let him feel how much he wanted him. "Why-y?" he drawled.

"I'm curious," Daniel admitted, incurably honest. "I've read so much about it but I've never..."

Jack kissed his nose, relaxing now, grinning. "Curiosity isn't a good enough reason to have another man inside you, Dr. Jackson," he answered easily, eyeing Daniel's mouth meaningfully.

"I can't imagine being closer to someone," Daniel said quietly. He slipped his fingers into Jack's hair. "Closer to you."

"You want this?" Jack asked, frowning.

"I think I need this." Daniel wriggled free of Jack and rolled off the narrow bunk. Gathering his pants up in one hand, he headed over to the medicine cabinet above the hand basin, rifling through the detritus of previous nights trapped on base until he found the small bottle of almond oil. When his sinuses were really bad, his ears hurt like hell. Warmed, the almond oil was soothing. He turned uncertainly, proffering the bottle.

Jack nodded, still watching him intently. He hitched his butt up off the bed and unzipped his BDUs, his dick jutting free when he slid them down over his hips.

Daniel was sure this was deliberate. He freed his hold on his pants to let them slither down over his hips. Jack's dick jerked as he stepped clear of the pants and walked back over to the bunk.

"Daniel," Jack sighed.

He handed him the almond oil. "Will this do?"

"You were hyperventilating over kissing me," Jack accused him, taking the bottle in a hand that shook.

"That was then," Daniel shrugged. Before he realised Jack couldn't push him away again. Before he realised he wouldn't let Jack do that to him again. He lay down on top of Jack and kissed him, pushing until Jack opened to him, hands suddenly clenching tight around his shoulders, the cool glass of the bottle resting against his spine. Fine tremors ran through them both. "I want to make love," he said urgently. "I don't know if..."

Jack had a look on his face, a look that scared Daniel. "We can take it as slow as you need," he said tightly.

It was the first time Daniel understood that Jack couldn't refuse him, that his weren't the only walls to come down.

He wasn't sure what he was expecting, but the little bottle was placed on the floor and Jack went right on kissing him. Eating his mouth; sucking and chewing on his tongue, stroking and rasping, pushing, curling around him, breathing into him until he was panting and shaken. Jack's hands were all over him, sure touch and steady, knowing pressure. Daniel

never knew how much he liked having his spine stroked or his ass kneaded like this, while Jack arched his throat for Daniel's kisses.

When Jack's thigh insinuated between his to rub insistently, Daniel rubbed right back, hissing at the friction. Jack smiled lazily up at him, then tipped him onto his back. His weight shifted then lifted, oil dribbled onto Daniel's belly and Jack stroked it down onto his dick.

"Jack?" Daniel asked, startled, hitching up so Jack could pull the covers out from under.

"I'm in love with you." Jack's eyes were grave as he stretched out, his weight comfortably balanced on Daniel as he cocooned them in blankets. "I didn't realise how much that hurt you until now. I love that you trust me this much, Daniel, that you want to be with me." He rested his forehead against Daniel's. "Let's wait a while," he suggested gently. "Can you trust me that much?"

Daniel had to swallow hard, but Jack saved him from having to find words to fit by kissing him like there was all the time in the world. Daniel was near giddy with relief to know this was real for Jack, too. It wasn't only about sex and the rush of feelings too long denied. Already, Jack was planning, working on where they'd take this new intimacy of theirs, who they'd be. Jack was content to accept Daniel for who and what he was, with no illusions, and to build what they wanted to share. It was a greater sign of commitment than Daniel would've dared to hope or to ask.

"We were good together last night," Jack suggested, rolling his hips.

"Very good," Daniel agreed, parting his thighs. "Close." He smiled up hesitantly, shy now Jack had heard so much he hadn't said, hadn't meant him to know. He took comfort in Jack's warm certitude, allowed his easy gentleness to steady him, expressing his gratitude in a kiss.

"We'll be closer, I promise," Jack murmured against Daniel's mouth, rocking forward, making love slow and easy, how Daniel liked it. He liked it so much he held Jack as close as he could, his hands curving up around Jack's shoulders, long legs wrapped around his. Jack liked this too, not just the obvious things, like skin, but listening to Daniel's breath quicken and sigh, the soft moans and cries he stifled in Jack's mouth. He felt the beat of Daniel's heart as they moved together. "Do you love me?" he breathed into an arched throat as Daniel shook and clung to him.

"Jack."

He smiled then. He knew. For Daniel, it was always him. Always.

**FINIS**